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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3688  
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000467

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA  
ALSO FOR IO/ A A/S WARLICK  
P FOR DRUSSELL AND RRANGASWAMY  
USUN FOR WOLFF/GERMAIN/SCHEDLBAUER  
DOD/OSD FOR FLOURNOY, KAHL, AND DALTON  
NSC FOR SHAPIRO, MCDERMOTT

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SUBJECT: LEBANON: BORDER SECURITY PROGRESS REPORT

Classified by Ambassador Michele Sison. Reason:  
1.4 (b) and (d)

REF: A. Beirut 101  
[1](#)B. 2008 Beirut 1584

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) On April 22, UN Special Coordinator on Lebanon (UNSCOL) Senior Political Officer Diego Zorrilla evaluated the current state of Lebanese efforts on improving border security as purely "organizational," without significant tangible progress on the ground. Zorrilla described GOL intentions to expand the Northern Border Pilot Program (NBPP) to the eastern border in two phases, but concluded the GOL still lacked a plan with clear goals and specific objectives as to which donor countries could contribute. Zorrilla explained the new effort on the eastern border would be a Lebanese led, multilateral effort, with UNSCOL acting as a planning process facilitator. Zorrilla remarked that because there was no meaningful progress since the August 2008 LIBAT II report, a follow up LIBAT III mission was unwarranted.

[1](#)2. (C) At the request of donors, UNSCOL intends to organize a series of workshops, beginning in the second half of May, to assist the GOL with developing a more concise eastern border security plan, including hiring and funding technical experts that would provide independent assessments and advice on a plan drafted by the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). The multilateral approach would involve creating a project management steering committee staffed by technical experts and GOL security officials. End Summary.

NEW TRACK:  
PROCESSES IN PLACE

[1](#)3. (C) Providing an update to Embassy Poloff on April 22, UNSCOL Senior Poloff Diego Zorrilla evaluated the current state of Lebanese efforts on improving border security as purely "organizational," without much tangible progress on the ground. GOL efforts on correcting the deficiencies described in the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team (LIBAT) I and II reports are so minimal that he believed a follow-on report (i.e. LIBAT III) would be unwarranted. However, describing GOL progress "better than a year ago." Zorrilla recounted that the steps taken since December 20,

2008 Cabinet decision to extend the NBPP's Common Border Force (CBF) plan to the northernmost 70 kilometers of eastern border with Syria have been to give the "green light" to military planners to develop a security plan, and to set up a ministerial-level border security committee. The LAF has produced its first draft, he noted. He mentioned that the ministerial committee first met in March, but only two of five members showed up. Thus, the session was postponed. This "non-action" was predicted by Interior Minister Ziad Baroud last January, when he commented on the lack of border security progress (reftel A).

¶4. (C) Zorrilla, who met with LAF Commander Jean Kahwagi on April 21, the current LAF-drafted plan to expand border security eastward recommended a two-stage approach, but with a different oversight and managerial structure than the current German-led NBPP plan. He said the eastern border security effort would be a multilateral effort, coordinated between GOL security agencies, all donor countries, and outside technical experts. He noted workshops on the expansion effort would take place between late April and July, with the first workshop scheduled for late May. The UNSCOL-organized workshops would bring in technical experts to help GOL security officials develop the two phased expansion plan in detail.

#### A NEW MODEL

¶5. (C) Donors have agreed to conduct and fund workshops with technical experts' inclusion. While it would be up to the

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security agencies; Internal Security Forces (ISF), Customs, General Security (Immigration), and the LAF to implement operational plans, the project will have a steering committee of GOL officials and technical experts to guide implementation and consult with donor countries on the project's progress. Donors, including the EU, U.S., Denmark, and Canada, believe that the involvement of and coordination among all donors with GOL political and security officials is a new organizational model for border security improvement. (Note: Donors have agreed that the new effort will not give Germany the lead, as it now has with the NBPP, in order to avoid the managerial and structural problems that have bedeviled the NBPP. End note.)

¶6. (C) The initial stage of the plan covers the first 70 kilometers of the northeastern border, with an implementation period between April 2009 and June 2010. The LAF forecasted the need for about 1200 personnel from the LAF, Internal Security Forces, Customs, and General Security/Immigration in the first stage with a total of about 3200 personnel to control the entire eastern border from the northern Fisan Valley to Shebba'. According to Zorrilla, the first stage will have a rough estimate cost of about \$50 million. A month-long terrain survey is scheduled (start date TBD) by security agencies and the LAF to bring more clarity to the current plan.

#### UNSCOL WILLIAMS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT PROGRESS

¶7. (C) UNSCOL Michael Williams, Zorrilla's Chief of Mission, told the Ambassador on April 23 that he believes progress on the eastern border security plan was unlikely before Lebanon's June 7 parliamentary election. Williams said that during UN SYG Ban's January visit to Damascus, Syrian President Bashar Asad said he was finishing border issues with Jordan and then planned to tackle Syria's border issues with Iraq. The Lebanon border was not Syria's priority, Williams assessed. Prime Minister Siniora also expressed skepticism about Syria-Lebanon border security in his April 23 meeting with Williams. Although the Syrians had been helpful in cracking down on recent drug disputes in the

Bekaa, Siniora suggested to Williams that the Syrians still maintained an open border policy.

COMMENT

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17. (C) Past discussions on border matters indicated the issue was one PM Siniora had taken on personally. All observations indicate that whatever momentum the issue had gained since Siniora's meeting with international donors in October (reftel B) has dissipated. Nonetheless, UNSCOL and the donors intend to continue to promote enhanced border security and UNSCR 1701 with GOL interlocutors. End comment.

SISON